

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MELBOU 00333 282201Z

12

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 TRSE-00 OMB-01

DRC-01 /109 W

----- 130107

R 280415Z MAR 74

FM AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2075

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

AMCONSUL BRISBANE

AMCONSUL PERTH

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, AS

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS (ACTU) TO PROTEST
GOVERNMENT PURCHASE OF US WARSHIPS

1. AUSTRALIAN MEDIA HAVE CARRIED STORIES, STARTING MID-MARCH, REPORTING AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PLAN TO INCREASE ITS NAVY BY THE PURCHASE OF TWO PATROL FRIGATES FROM USG. ACCORDING TO PRESS STORIES PURCHASE WAS NECESSARY TO ADD NAVY STRENGTH IMMEDIATELY RATHER THAN UNDERGO DELAY IF FRIGATES WERE BUILT IN AUSTRALIAN DOCKYARDS.

2. NEWSPAPERS MARCH 26 REPORTED THAT ACTU DELEGATION WILL CALL ON DEFENSE MINISTER BARNARD ON MARCH 29 TO PROTEST PLANNED PURCHASE.

3. ACTU PRESIDENT BOB HAWKE TOLD LABATT MARCH 27 THAT THERE WAS NO POLITICAL MOTIVATION FOR WORKERS' ACTION. HE CITED RESOLUTION PASSED AT ACTU BIENNIAL CONFERENCE IN 1973 CALLING FOR EXPANSION
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PAGE 02 MELBOU 00333 282201Z

OF SHIPBUILDING INDUSTRY. HAWKE ALSO CITED RECENT EXECUTIVE

COMMITTEE DECISION TO IMPLEMENT CONFERENCE RESOLUTION. HE SAID THAT ACTU RECOGNIZED VALIDITY OF GOA NEED FOR QUICK REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING AGING EQUIPMENT BUT WORKERS FEELING WAS THAT THEY MUST ACT TO PREVENT DETERIORATION IN SHIPBUILDING INDUSTRY. HAWKE SAID ALSO THAT WORKERS UNDERSTAND THAT MUCH SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT, NOT NOW AVAILABLE IN AUSTRALIA, WOULD HAVE TO BE SECURED FROM US SOURCES IF GOA CHANGED ITS PLAN AND RE-INSTITUTED SHIPBUILDING PROGRAM TO BUILD THREE SHIPS AT WILLIAMSTOWN NAVAL DOCKYARD, MELBOURNE.

4. COMMENT: LABATT FEELS THAT HAWKE-LED DELEGATION IS DESIGNED REALLY TO DEFUSE WORKER PROTEST WHICH OTHERWISE MIGHT TAKE ON POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS IF LEFT-WING UNIONS DECIDED TO BLOW UP ISSUE. HAWKE HAS PROMISED TO KEEP LABATT ADVISED ON SITUATION. BROWN

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